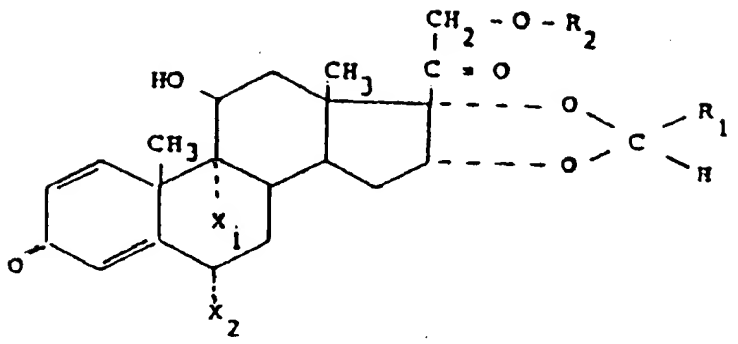
In the Claims:

1. A compound of the formula



T390X

in the form of an R epimer, an S epimer, or a stereoisomeric mixture of the R and S epimers in terms of the orientation of the substituents on the carbon atom at position 22, wherein:

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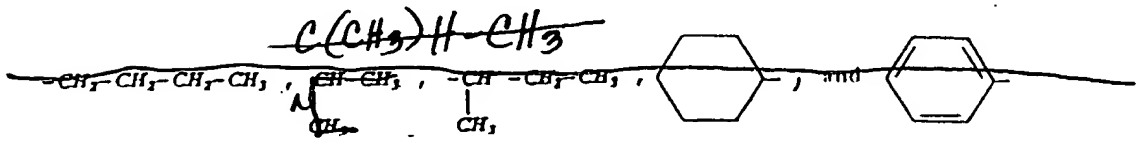
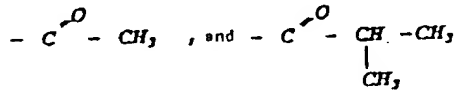
R_1 is ~~a member selected from the group consisting of~~ cyclohexyl,



R_2 is a member selected from the group consisting of

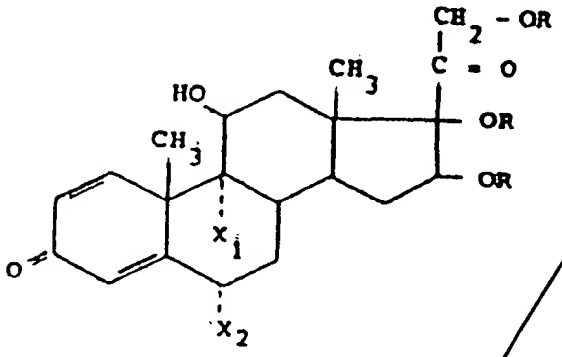


and wherein X_1 and X_2 may be the same or different and each is a member selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and fluorine.

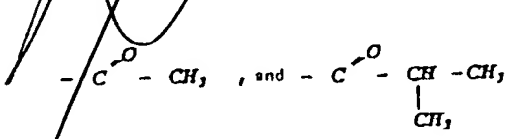
2. A compound according to claim 1 in the form of the (22S)- epimer.

3. A compound according to claim 1 in the form of the (22R)- epimer.

4. A process for the preparation of compounds of claim 1, comprising the steps of hydrolysis-ketalization of a compound of formula

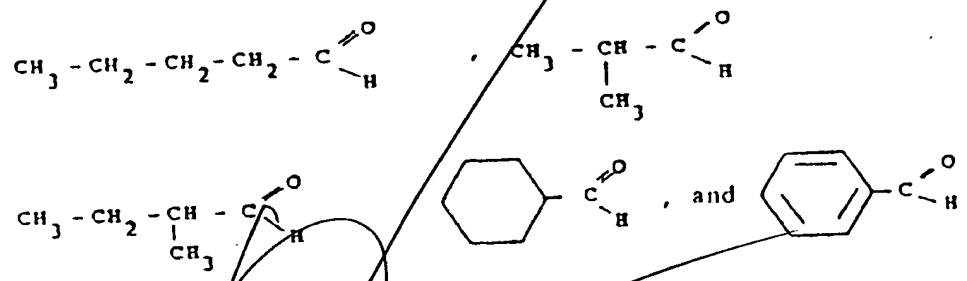


wherein R is a member selected from the group consisting of



and wherein X_1 and X_2 may be the same or different and each is a member selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and fluorine with an anhydrous solvent is a

member selected from the group solvent consisting of dioxane, methylene chloride, and chloroform, containing dissolved therein from about 10 to about 15 wt% hydrogen chloride gas, to selectively hydrolyze the ester groups at C-16 and C-17; reacting said hydrolyzed product at room temperature with an aldehyde is a member selected from the group consisting of



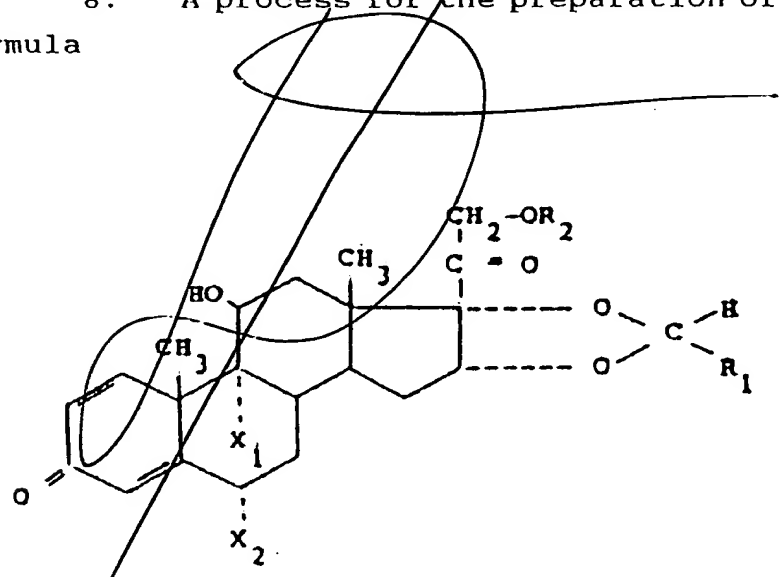
to form the corresponding ketals between said C-16 and C-17, said reaction being conducted in the presence of a perchloric acid catalyst to obtain a mixture of epimers of the compound of claim 1 wherein the S-R epimer proportions are in the range from about 40:60 to about 60:40.

5. The process of claim 4 including the added step of recrystallizing said product from a mixture of ethanol and acetone.

6. The process according to claim 5 wherein said ethanol/acetone mixture is in the proportion of about 5 parts by volume of ethanol to about 3 parts by volume of acetone.

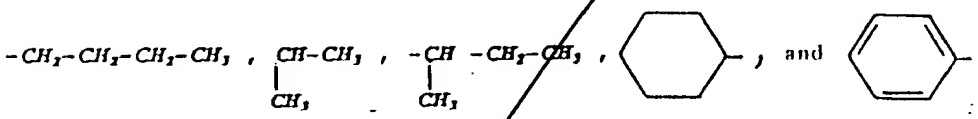
7. The process according to claim 5 wherein about 16 ml of said ethanol/acetone mixture is used for every 1 gm of product.

8. A process for the preparation of compounds of formula

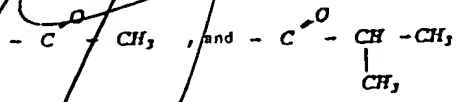


in which the said formula represents the S epimer corresponding to the asymmetric center at C-22 wherein:

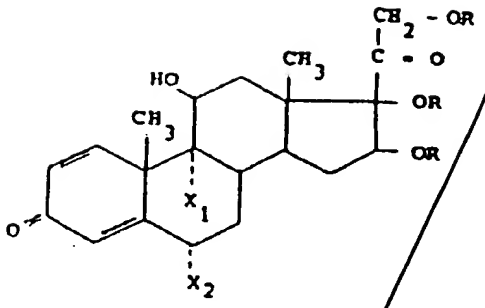
R_1 is a member selected from the group consisting of



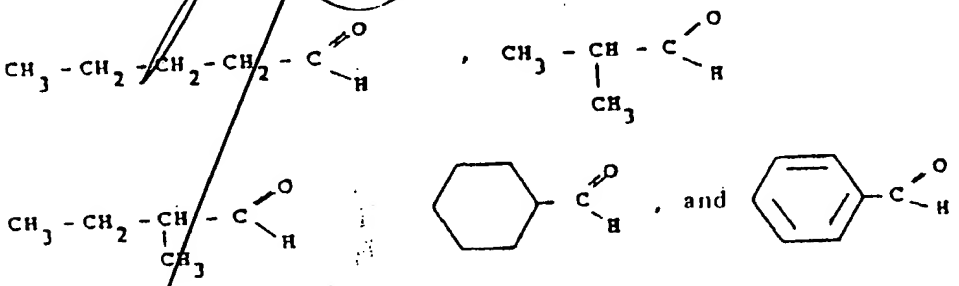
R_2 is a member selected from the group consisting of



and wherein X_1 and X_2 may be the same or different and each is a member selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and fluorine, the steps comprising the hydrolysis-ketalization of compounds of forumula



with anhydrous solvent selected from the group consisting of dioxane, methylene chloride, and chloroform, said solvent containing dissolved therein from about 10 to about 15 wt% hydrogen chloride gas, to selectively hydrolize the ester groups at C-16 and C-17; reacting said hydrolyzed product at room temperature with an aldehyde is a member selected from the group consisting of



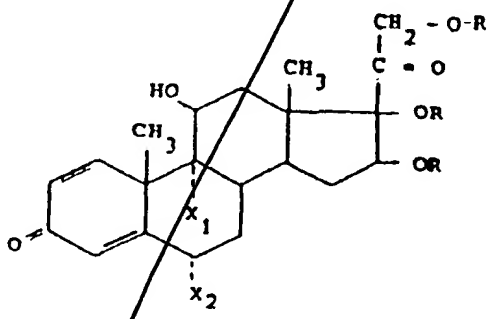
to form the corresponding ketals between said C-16 and C-17, said reaction being conducted in the presence of a p-toluensulfonic acid catalyst to obtain the (22s)-epimer of the compound of claim 1.

9. The process of claim 8 including the added step of recrystallizing said product from a mixture of ethanol and acetone.

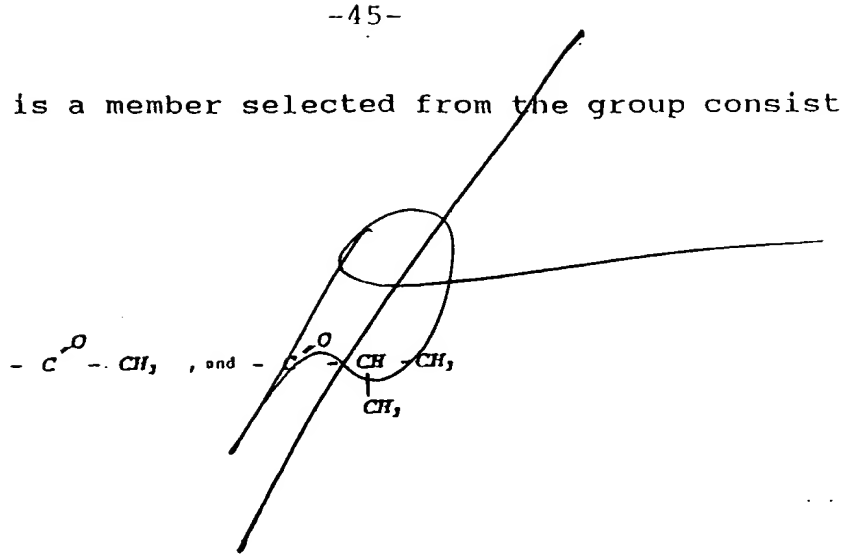
10. The process according to claim 9 wherein said ethanol/acetone mixture is in the proportion of about 5 parts by volume of ethanol to about 3 parts by volume of acetone.

11. The process according to claim 9 wherein about 16 ml of said ethanol/acetone mixture is used for every 1 gm of product.

12. An intermediate compound for the preparation of compounds according to claim 1, characterized by the formula



wherein R is a member selected from the group consisting of



13. An anti-inflammatory drug corresponding to the novel composition of claim 1.

14. A therapeutic application of a compound according to claim 1 based on anti-inflammatory pharmacologic activity and characterized by:

Low systemic glucocorticoid effect;

Topical pharmacologic activity greater than reference standards;

Therapeutic indexes above those found for reference compounds.

15. A drug with topical glucocorticoid pharmacologic activity, comprising a composition according to claim 1.

16. A method for the treatment and control of inflammatory conditions in mammals, including humans, characterized by the topical administration of an effective does of the compound according to claim 1.